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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRT LASHKAR GAH: HELMAND: TWO SUICIDE BOMBINGS,
PRTOFF VEHICLE HIT

1. (SBU) At about 1115hrs on March 13, approximately one mile south of the PRT, two DynCorp vehicles (attached to the Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) coming from Bost airfield and driving to the Lashkar Gah PRT in Helmand were the targets of an IED attack. It has not been confirmed whether it was a suicide body-borne or an ordinary IED, but the spray pattern of the bomb's ball-bearings in the vehicles appears consistent with a suicide IED attack (traces of what might be bits of burned flesh were also found on the vehicle). An occupant of one of the vehicles believes he saw someone approach the vehicles immediately before the blast and, given the person's arm gestures, the occupant thought the person may have tossed items towards the vehicle; however, the pattern of damage may not support a "thrown IED". Both vehicles sustained extensive damage and only one remained drivable. The PRT's quick reaction force reached the convoy within approximately ten minutes and assisted with retrieval of the disabled vehicle.

2. (SBU) There were no serious casualties in the convoy. The (USCIT) leader of the DynCorp team sustained a cut to the head, which was treated at the PRT, and State PRTOff, who was in the front vehicle, was uninjured. There are reports of a few injuries to Afghan civilians at the crowded intersection, with the Deputy Police Chief reportedly claiming two children and two laborers were wounded. (NOTE: Members of a separate DynCorp convoy later reported that they were at the PRT's gate at the time of the incident, having passed several minutes before through the same intersection where the IED detonated. END NOTE.)

3. (SBU) Approximately twenty minutes after and roughly three-quarters of a mile west of the first incident a second suicide bomber, on foot, detonated an IED at the entrance to the Afghan National Army compound as the ANA commander was entering in a vehicle. An ANA soldier reportedly identified the bomber and fired warning shots, perhaps prompting the attacker to detonate prematurely; the bomber was the only one killed, with the commander and a sergeant receiving only slight shrapnel wounds. (NOTE: There were reports of small

arms fire in downtown Lashkar Gah, rumored at one point to be related to the first incident. The convoy does not appear to have come under fire, and it is unclear whether it was related to the second incident. END NOTE.)

14. (SBU) Local press later carried claims attributed to the Taliban asserting that eight NATO soldiers were killed in the first incident, and ten ANA soldiers were killed in the second. The Governor,s spokesperson will counter that message with the facts of the incidents (if not already done).

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